



## WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is a normal emotion that we all experience from time to time. Life's circumstances provide many events for us to face with uncertainty and doubt. Often times we are well aware of the exact cause of our nervous feelings. We also recognize that with time our anxious feelings will subside and we return to a "normal" mood state.

However, sometimes anxiety becomes an overwhelming emotion that seems to consume someone's life. Worse yet, the person may not be able to identify anything specific that is causing their anxiety. It just seems like everything and anything contributes to their anxious feelings.

Counselors and people who research anxiety problems tell us that frequently there seems to be a family connection with anxiety. It's not uncommon for someone who suffers from anxiety to report that a parent or grandparent may have had similar concerns. This often leads people to think that there is a genetic or biochemical cause of their anxiety. While this may be the case in some situations, it frequently overlooks other contributing factors. Another possible explanation is that an individual learns anxious or "worrying" feelings and behavior from their family members. This is the classic "nature vs. nurture" question.

While only your medical doctor or a psychiatrist can prescribe medications for the possible biochemical causes of anxiety, a counselor can help you understand how your thoughts may contribute to and intensify the anxiety you feel. The nature of having an anxiety problem can contribute to impatience and distractibility which sometimes makes counseling challenging. However, those persons who can "stick with it" and give counseling a few sessions, often times end up seeing positive changes and a diminishing of the anxiety they feel. There may even be times when a combination of medication and counseling is a good way to get started, with an eventual decrease in medication.